

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ASUNCI 00690 181741Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08
LAB-04 SIL-01 MCT-01 /076 W
-----097224 181742Z /43
O 181753Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2328

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 0690

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, ELAB, PA
SUBJ: RELEASE OF TRADE UNINISTS

SUMMARY. 19 INNOCENT LABOR LEADERS WERE
ARRESTED -- SOME TORTURED -- IN DECEMBER ON ORDERS OF PARAGUAY7S
SECRET POLICE CHIEF CORONEL. HAD THE CASE BEEN HANDLED ROUTINELY
THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN LEFT TO LANGUISH IN PRISON FOR YEARS. THE
COMBINED CAMPAIGN MOUNTED BY THE EMBASSY, AIFLD, AND AFL-CIO,
LATER JOINED BY THE LOCAL PRESS AND THE PARAGUAYAN LABOR CONFEDERA-
TION (THE LATTER THANKS TO THE STIFFENING PROVIDED BY OUR LOCAL
AIFLD REPRESENTATIVE), FORCED THE GOVERNMENT TO MOVE SWIFTLY
TO FIND ALL 19 INNOCENT AND TO RELEASE THEM WITHIN AN UNPRECE-
DENTED TWO MONTHS. AMERICAN LABOR LEADERS DOHERTY AND BOGGS
BROUGHT EFFECTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL PRESSURE ON THE GOP, WHICH NOT
ONLY GAINED FREEDOM FOR THE 19 BUT SIGNIFICANTLY STRENGTHENED
THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE PARAGUAYAN LABOR MOVEMENT AND OF THE
LOCAL PRESS. THE IMPACT IS ALL THE MORE DRAMATIC BECAUSE THIS
HAPPENED IN SPITE OF AN ALL OUT LAST-DITCH EFFORT BY CORONEL AND
MONTANARO TO LINK THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LABOR LEADERS TO AN
OBVIOUSLY FABRICATED SUBVERSIVE PLOT. THESE TWO ARE NOW
SEETHING, AND BLAME US FOR THEIR HAVING MADE FOOLS OF THEMSELVES.
BUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT THOSE WITHIN THE GOP WHO SYMPATHIZE
WITH OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED. SUGGEST
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ASUNCI 00690 181741Z

DOHERTY MAY WITH TO ISSUE A PUBLIC STATEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. ON DECEMBER 17 AND 18 SECRET POLICE CHIEF CORONEL
CAUSED THE ARREST OF NINETEEN TRADE UNIONISTS. SOME WERE
TORTURED; ALL RECEIVED ROUGH TREATMENT.

2. THE COURSE OF EVENTS WAS PREDICTABLE. THE ACCUSED WOULD

STAY IN PRISON FOR MONTHS AND MONTHS; THERE WOULD BE MORE TORTURE; COMMUNIST TIES WOULD BE DISCOVERED; A FEW MIGHT SUCCEED IN ACHIEVING THEIR RELEASE BECAUSE OF OUTSIDE INFLUENCE BUT MANY WOULD LANGUISH IN PRISON FOR YEARS; THE PRESS WOULD REPORT NOTHING MORE THAN THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT STORY AND THE PARAGUAYAN CONFEDERATION OF WORKERS (CPT) WOULD SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION.

3. THINGS DID NOT TURN OUT THAT WAY BECAUSE OF COORDINATED ACTION BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND AIFLD. AT THE AMBASSADOR'S DIRECTION AIFLD LABOR ADVISOR TORRES LAZO BEGAN WORKING ON THE CPT. THE RESULT WAS A CPT PROTEST, THE FIRST TIME IN TWENTY-THREE YEARS THAT THE CPT HAD QUESTIONED AN ACTION OF THE GOVERNMENT.

4. WITH THE ARRIVAL OF AIFLD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WILLIAM DOHERTY AND MICHAEL BOGGS OF THE AFL-CIO THINGS REALLY BEGAN TO MOVE. THE EMBASSY HAD ISSUED A PRESS RELEASE ANNOUNCING THE TEAM'S IMMINENT ARRIVAL AND STATING THE GROUP WAS COMING TO CONSULT WITH THE AMBASSADOR AND MEET WITH THE CPT. THE ACTIVITIES OF DOHERTY AND BOGGS SHOOK THIS GOVERNMENT AS IT HAS NOT BEEN SHAKEN IN MANY YEARS. STRAIGHT ANSWERS, COLORFUL LANGUAGE IN GOOD SPANISH, A VISIT TO THE PRISONERS AND FREQUENT REFERENCES TO AFL-CIO'S TOTAL COMMITMENT TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION COWED THE CABAL AROUND THE PRESIDENT AND ENCOURAGED THE DECENT OFFICIALS OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE MINISTER OF LABOR AND JUSTICE, RESPONDING TO CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ASUNCI 00690 181741Z

BILL DOHERTY'S INSISTENT QUESTIONING, ADMITTED THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY OF THE TRADE UNIONISTS HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN SUBVERSION. THE PRESS, STRONGLY ENCOURAGED BY TORRES LAZO, TOOK A DEEP BREATH AND PRINTED BLOW BY BLOW ACCOUNTS OF THE PROCEEDINGS.

5. THE RELEASE OF ALL THE IMPRISONED LABOR LEADERS HAS DEALT A SEVERE BLOW TO SECRET POLICE CHIEF CORONEL AND TO INTERIOR MINISTER MONTANARO. IT IS ALL THE WORSE BECAUSE CORONEL FABRICATED A SHOOTOUT AND EXPLOSION WHICH RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF ONE "SUBVERSIVE," THE ALLEGED WOUNDING OF THREE POLICEMEN, AND THE "DISCOVERY" OF DOCUMENTS LINKING THE NINETEEN PRISONERS TO A SUBVERSIVE PLOT. WHEN THIS BLUFF FAILED, MONTANARO GAVE PUBLIC WARNING THAT IF SUBVERSION WERE NOT CONTAINED THE COLORADO PARTY MILITANTS MIGHT HAVE TO TAKE THE LAW INTO THEIR OWN HANDS. IN OTHER DAYS THEY WOULD HAVE HAD THEIR WAY. INSTEAD, THEY WERE IGNORED AND PRESIDENT STROESSNER ORDERED THAT THE JUDICIAL PROCESSING AND RELEASE OF THE PRISONERS BE SPEEDED UP.

6. THE ANGER OF MONTANARO AND CORONEL OVER THE RESULT IS SUCH THAT ONE OF THE AMBASSADOR'S FRIENDS IN THE ADMINISTRA-

TION FELT IT NECESSARY TO SEND HIM A WARNING TO TAKE SPECIAL CARE BECAUSE "SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE CAPABLE OF ANYTHING."

7. COMMENT: THE RELEASE OF THE PRISONERS DEMONSTRATES THAT IF WE MAINTAIN HUMAN RIGHTS AS THE CENTERPIECE OF OUR POLICY, USE ALL THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO US, (IN THIS CASE THE INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTION OF THE AFL-CIO) AND REFUSE TO BE BLUFFED BY SELF-SERVING AND HYPOCRITICAL CHARGES OF INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS, SOLID ADVANCES CAN BE ACHIEVED.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: SUGGEST DOHERTY MAY WISH TO CONSIDER ISSUING A PUBLIC STATEMENT CONGRATULATING THE 19 ON THEIR RELEASE, EXPRESSING ADMIRATION AND RESPECT TO THE MINISTER OF LABOR AND JUSTICE FOR HIS POSITIVE ROLE AND THE SWIFT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 ASUNCI 00690 181741Z

HANDLING OF THE CASE IN THE COURTS, AND EXTENDING BEST WISHES TO THE CPT.
WHITE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: UNION GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS, PRISONERS RELEASE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ASUNCI00690
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780076-0466
Format: TEL
From: ASUNCION
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780238/aaaabfup.tel
Line Count: 139
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e7f007d4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3550350
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RELEASE OF TRADE UNINISTS SUMMARY. 19 INNOCENT LABOR LEADERS WERE ARRESTED -- SOME TORTURED -- IN DECEMBER ON ORDERS
TAGS: SHUM, ELAB, PA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e7f007d4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014